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**Economic and Social Council**
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General segment

**Provisional summary record of the 45th meeting**
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 24 July 2013, at 10 a.m.

*President*: Mr. Sajdik (Vice-President) ..... (Austria)

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*In the absence of Mr. Osorio (Colombia), Mr. Sajdik (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Coordination, programme and other questions** (*continued*)

**(c) Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system** (E/2013/71 and E/2013/L.14)

**Economic and environmental questions** (*continued*)

**(l) Women and development** (E/2013/27 and E/2013/NGO/132)

**Social and human rights questions**

**(a) Advancement of women** (E/2013/27, E/2013/75, E/2013/NGO/63, E/2013/NGO/135 and E/2013/NGO/147)

**The President** said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to which 187 States were parties, was the second most widely ratified human rights treaty.

**Ms. Ameline** (Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that the fulfilment of women's rights was essential for just and harmonious development. The time had come not so much to define new standards, as to put into practice already long established rights. That the human rights treaty body strengthening process and reflection on the post-2015 development agenda were taking place at the same time was fortuitous and illustrated the need to improve coordination between the human rights treaty bodies and development agencies and to link the implementation of international human rights treaties and development policy more closely. An ambitious approach to gender issues was needed to promote the full participation of women in the process of pursuing economic growth. Sustainable development was unthinkable without a solid foundation in fundamental rights.

Development agencies should systematically encourage implementation of the Convention, which could be a source of inspiration to public and private sector donors. The Committee was developing an implementation guide for States parties, which would be all the more useful if accompanied by a more institutionalized partnership between the Committee and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). In the view of the Committee, the financial and professional emancipation of women was of primary importance.

**Ms. Puri** (Acting Head of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system" (E/2013/71), said that there was a clear mandate to reinvigorate the substantive aspects of gender mainstreaming in development programming. In the quadrennial comprehensive policy review resolution (A/RES/67/226) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2012, the General Assembly emphasized the need to acquire sufficient expertise on gender mainstreaming within the United Nations development system in order to ensure that the needs of men and women were taken into equal consideration throughout the programming cycle.

The full and equal participation of women was essential for the realization of sustainable development, poverty eradication and human rights and for peace and security.

By carrying out gender mainstreaming in its own organizations, the United Nations system would be better placed to help Member States to do more in order to improve the situation of women.

The Secretary-General's report contained, for the first time, data from 55 United Nations entities on progress made under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. It also contained data drawn from reports from resident coordinators and United Nations country teams in 123 countries. Implementation of the Action Plan had led to improvements in consistency, coordination and knowledge management across the system. Reporting had also been harmonized.

The United Nations system currently met or exceeded requirements in only 31 per cent of ratings on performance indicators set under the Action Plan. Much remained to be done to achieve the 15 gender-mainstreaming targets set for 2017. UN-Women was active in all "Delivering as One" countries and would continue to provide technical assistance to mainstream gender equality. A growing number of country teams had included gender equality initiatives in their workplans. The initiatives revolved around ending violence against women, improving reproductive health, combating HIV/AIDS, expanding women's political involvement, broadening their access to education, and incorporating gender equality into national development and poverty reduction strategies. Of a total of 113 gender theme groups around the world, 62 were led by UN-Women. In the Islamic Republic of Iran, for example, a gender working group had organized meetings to identify ways of mainstreaming gender into the United Nations development assistance framework for 2012–2016. Gender equality figured prominently in the Common Strategic Priorities for 2013–2016 of the United Nations Development Group.

Tools such as the United Nations Development Group gender scorecard, which had been applied by 31 countries, gender audits and the gender marker were used to enhance accountability for gender equality. The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality Initiative had been launched with the aim of generating comparable gender-specific data in areas such as health, education and employment. Although much had been achieved, coordination across the United Nations system must be improved, and that would require more resources. Efforts should be stepped up to incorporate gender perspectives into development work at the country level.

*Panel discussion: "Making the United Nations system accountable for gender equality and women's empowerment: progress, gaps and challenges"*

*The President invited Ms. Puri (Acting Head of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)) to serve as moderator.*

**Ms. Puri** (Moderator) said that the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women had already proven its worth and was being emulated in other areas. Constant monitoring of United Nations entities would be required in order to maintain momentum in the process of empowering women.

**Ms. Pansieri** (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) had introduced a gender equality policy in 2011 and a gender equality strategic plan in 2012. Consideration of gender had become a component of all performance plans and internal monitoring tools had been developed to gauge the commitment of staff to gender equality. The launch of a peer review mechanism would enhance the capacity of staff to learn collectively. All United Nations organizations should define theme-specific gender markers in order to refine monitoring processes. Complete gender parity had been achieved at OHCHR at the upper management and junior levels. The area of middle-management posed greater challenges, as the demands of work and travel were not always compatible with

family life. There should be no relaxation of efforts to deepen understanding and refine methodologies with regard to gender equality in international organizations and Member States.

**Ms. Khozi Mukwashi** (Chief, Volunteer Knowledge and Innovation Section, United Nations Volunteers programme) said that the State of the World's Volunteerism report of 2011 had recognized the link between gender and volunteerism and the fact that, through volunteerism, women could challenge their traditional place in society. The United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) had been incorporating the gender perspective into its activities prior to the introduction of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN SWAP). The introduction of the Action Plan allowed UNV to identify issues that needed to be addressed and encouraged staff and management to discuss gender equality and the strategic framework that would guide the organization's work for the next few years. As a result of those discussions, staff members had developed a better understanding of gender mainstreaming and its impact on areas of work such as finance, programming and human resources. Volunteers worked with over 30 partners of the United Nations in 127 countries. It was therefore important to invest in volunteers and provide them with the knowledge and tools that they required to promote gender mainstreaming. UNV had devised a volunteer learning strategy.

UNV would attain the standards set in the Action Plan by means of a phased approach. Its strategic framework would be designed to ensure that: women were not viewed as a marginalized group, but rather as agents of change; investment was directed towards the next generation; and volunteers were empowered to influence and alter social structures and behaviour. UNV measured the progress made towards achieving gender balance among volunteers, especially those involved in peacekeeping missions, reviewed project proposals, monitored interventions using a gender lens and had developed a guidance note on mainstreaming gender and volunteerism for all volunteers. It planned to introduce a gender policy and action plan.

**Mr. Crowe** (Senior Gender Specialist, International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ILO had been a willing partner in developing the System-wide Action Plan. It had participated in discussions with the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and with UN-Women, shared its experiences with other United Nations entities, and conducted participatory gender audits. ILO had had a head start in attaining the standards set in the Action Plan, as its gender equality and gender mainstreaming policy had been set in 1999. The ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality had been devised to implement that policy by ensuring that: 50 per cent of professional posts were occupied by women by 2015; the policy was linked to both results-based management and to programme and budget cycles; and that the Bureau for Gender Equality remained the focal point for all activities in that area. The ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality was regularly updated and had been aligned with the ILO Strategic Policy Framework (2010–2015). In 2013, UN-Women had found ILO to have exceeded the requirements for 3 performance indicators, to have met the requirements for 10 and to have approached the requirements for 1.

ILO had also worked with the United Nations Development Group to develop performance indicators for the gender scorecard launched in 2008. It had helped country teams to use participatory gender audits to establish development assistance frameworks and it had adapted the training manual on participatory gender audits for use within the United Nations system. However, while ILO was on the right track, the assessment carried out by UN-Women had shown that it needed to improve in the areas of capacity-building and resource allocation. ILO also needed to learn from the good practices and initiatives of other United Nations entities and to revise the ILO Action Plan for Gender Equality to take into account the indicators in the System-wide Action Plan. The ILO hoped to meet the minimum requirements set out therein by 2017.

**Ms. Ellis** (New Zealand) enquired as to the cultural changes that were needed to improve the effectiveness of the Action Plan.

**Mr. Pellet** (France) said that his Government had long supported the advancement of women's rights, particularly within the Security Council. In that connection, his Government perceived the need to set up a Security Council working group on violence against women. While the progress made in implementing the Action Plan was commendable, the numerous entities involved should not lose sight of the key objectives and allow the process to become a bureaucratic exercise. He asked how the relations between the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, UN-Women and OHCHR could be strengthened. He said that the recommendations made by the Committee should be disseminated more widely throughout the United Nations system. He also asked how women's sexual and reproductive rights could be promoted in the context of gender mainstreaming.

**Mr. Holtz** (United Kingdom), noting that a considerable number of entities had not yet incorporated the gender perspective into their strategic planning, enquired as to the obstacles preventing them from doing so.

**Ms. Kasid** (Observer for Iraq) said that, thanks to the efforts of United Nations entities and civil society, the gender perspective had started to gain ground in State institutions in Iraq. While steps had already been taken to mainstream the gender perspective in a number of ministries, efforts in that area needed to be stepped up. Furthermore, her Government recognized the need to introduce a mechanism for monitoring the progress made in mainstreaming the gender perspective in Iraq, but would require the support of the United Nations system in that endeavour.

**Ms. Puri** (Moderator) said that the purpose of gender mainstreaming was to increase the visibility of the gender perspective and to ensure that that perspective was incorporated into all programmes and policies. Promoting and protecting women's sexual and reproductive rights was a key aspect of gender mainstreaming, given that the special role that women played in reproduction led to discrimination and placed them in a vulnerable position. Policies related to health and strategies to end violence against women should take those rights into account.

**Ms. Ameline** (Chairperson, Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) said that it was necessary to develop a results-based culture in order to improve the effectiveness of the System-wide Action Plan. The Committee recognized the need for greater cooperation with UN-Women and, to that end, had suggested that a memorandum of understanding or a partnership should be established with the organization. While the Committee's recommendations could serve as a road map for gender mainstreaming, they needed to be better incorporated into the activities of stakeholders on the ground. It was also important to involve all government ministries and relevant State actors in gender mainstreaming.

**Ms. Khozi Mukwashi** (Chief, Volunteer Knowledge and Innovation Section, United Nations Volunteers programme) said that there needed to be a cultural shift from complying with instructions to mainstreaming the gender perspective as a matter of course.

**Mr. Crowe** (Senior Gender Specialist, International Labour Organization) said that the leadership of an organization was responsible for driving cultural change in the organization. Moreover, technical staff needed to understand how gender mainstreaming was relevant to their work, if it were to become second nature. Within ILO, participatory gender audits had proved useful in assessing the progress of a particular unit in incorporating the gender perspective and had shed light on many issues, including the appropriateness of working hours and meeting times. Furthermore, the gender perspective was automatically incorporated into programme and budget cycles, evaluations and Decent

Work Country programmes. The gender perspective did not disappear, rather it became part of the regular work of ILO.

**Ms. Pansieri** (United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that strong leadership was needed to bring about cultural change. The leadership of an organization was responsible for reiterating the importance of the gender perspective and for holding staff members accountable. Within OHCHR, the gender perspective was taken into account in recruitment, performance assessments and the design of programmes and activities. Mechanisms for measuring the progress made in mainstreaming the gender perspective were used to ensure accountability and foster change. However, staff members could not be held accountable if they had not been given the necessary tools. The fact that representatives from OHCHR, UN-Women and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women were participating in the same panel discussion demonstrated that they shared common goals and could work together to achieve them. Moreover, OHCHR was preparing to sign a cooperation agreement with UN-Women.

**Ms. Puri** (Moderator) said that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was, for all intents and purposes, a women's bill of rights and underpinned her organization's work. UN-Women worked closely with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on a number of matters, including the development of its general recommendations.

**Mr. Paulauskas** (Observer for Lithuania), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Liechtenstein and Republic of Moldova, welcomed the agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls that had been adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women in 2013. He said that custom, tradition, culture, privacy, religion or so-called honour could not be invoked to justify violence against women or absolve States from their responsibilities. Internationally agreed standards, goals and commitments must be established and heightened vigilance was needed in order to curb any attempt to dilute their content. Notwithstanding the advances made in areas such as access to education, the problems of maternal mortality and widespread sexual and gender-based violence had not diminished. More must be done to deliver progress. The European Union welcomed the strong focus on gender equality and women's empowerment in the report of the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The European Union and UN-Women had signed a memorandum of understanding in 2012 to foster policy dialogue and cooperation on eliminating gender-based violence. The European Union also supported accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system.

**Ms. Raupa** (Latvia) said that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls must be integrated into the post-2015 development agenda. In Latvia, 65 per cent of university graduates and 23 per cent of parliamentarians were women. In the wake of the global crisis, women's entrepreneurship had gained momentum, partly aided by easy access to microcredit. Social networks and modern technology had created new opportunities for combining a professional career with family duties. Latvia had set up 36 crisis centres for victims of domestic and sexual violence, and health professionals had been trained to deal with such cases. In addition, awareness campaigns and capacity-building activities were carried out to tackle human trafficking.

**Mr. Imanishi** (Japan) said that he supported continued efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into all United Nations policies and programmes. Japan had joined the Secretary-General's campaign entitled: "Say no – UNiTE to End Violence against Women"

and was preparing a national action plan on women, peace and security to reinforce those efforts. Japan also worked to create an enabling environment for women's participation in the labour market and to deal with the phenomenon whereby most Japanese women stopped working once they had a family.

**Ms. Robl** (United States of America) said that intimate partner violence and violence against women and girls based on their sexual orientation and gender identity were under-discussed and under-reported. The adoption of the agreed conclusions by the Commission on the Status of Women was an important step towards addressing those issues, which were a priority for her Government. Her delegation welcomed the leadership of UN-Women in advancing the United Nations System-wide Action Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment. The Action Plan and the scorecard used to assess the performance of United Nations country teams in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women would be useful tools for measuring progress.

**Ms. Arriaga Mejia** (Observer for Honduras) said that it was important to keep up the momentum and report regularly on further progress under the Action Plan. In the document entitled "Vision for the Country 2010–2038", her Government had established gender equality as a State policy. A national policy on women and a law on equal opportunities for women had been established and a national women's institution had been set up to promote gender equality. Domestic violence, sexual violence and lack of economic opportunities for women posed problems in many countries. Member States should live up to their international commitments and include gender equality and women's empowerment in the post-2015 development agenda.

**Mr. Lashev** (Bulgaria) conveyed his Government's gratitude to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for its positive assessment of the State's combined fourth, fifth and seventh periodic reports in 2012. However, when formulating recommendations, he said that the Committee should keep to its mandate, rather than expand the dialogue with States parties to topics outside the scope of the Convention.

**Ms. González Zambrano** (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her Government had adopted policies to guarantee women access to credit, education, training, technology, public services and decision-making. Several initiatives had been undertaken to promote the full participation of women in the economy. The country's Women's Development Bank had been set up to provide poor women with access to resources. Policies and procedures had been put in place to create political, social, economic and cultural opportunities for women. The legal framework for gender equality had been expanded and good progress had been made in achieving gender parity in education. There was a need for a greater focus on poverty reduction, employment creation and free access to health and education.

**Mr. Rakovski** (Russian Federation) said that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must remain the key United Nations entity for coordinating international efforts to promote women's rights. Any attempt to discredit the Committee or replace it with other structures was unacceptable. The field activities conducted by UN-Women must be undertaken at the request of the countries concerned. His Government had adopted a national strategy on women's economic empowerment. It had recently ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

**Ms. Sigaqa** (South Africa) said that more must be done to alleviate the plight of women in conflict and post-conflict situations and of women living under foreign occupation and to combat violence, abuse and assault worldwide. South Africa had established progressive legislation, institutions and law enforcement agencies for that

purpose. The Thuthuzela Care Centres in South Africa had been recognized by the United Nations as providing a comprehensive service to victims of gender-based violence. For South Africa, empowering rural women, was particularly important.

**Ms. Rotheiser-Scott** (Austria) said that States must address the problem of gender-related killings of women. It was important to raise awareness of the problem. The recent adoption by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice of a resolution on action against femicide/gender-related killing of women and girls was a commendable step in that direction; implementation must ensue.

**Mr. Mohamed** (Libya) said that it was regrettable that the preparation of the agreed conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls had been tainted by cultural bias. Several paragraphs of the document were counter to the teachings of Islam, which recognized the rights of women. His delegation would continue to engage with others to ensure that those concerns were addressed. Women in Libya participated in the political and social life of the country, including the transition process.

**Mr. Elmrtada Mubarak Ismail** (Sudan) said that he supported the views expressed by the representative of Libya. Women in the Sudan were strongly represented at all levels of education, accounted for 36 per cent of members of parliament and occupied senior positions in the Government.

**Mr. Johnsson** (Inter-Parliamentary Union – IPU) said that IPU mobilized parliaments to build effective legal frameworks to criminalize and prevent violence against women. Violence against women in the political arena went mostly unreported and impeded women's participation in political life. The Plurinational State of Bolivia had adopted specific legislation on such violence. Violence against women must be defined and indicators and documentation used to develop a complete picture of the phenomenon. Women must not be seen as just victims; they could play an important role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. In Mali, the Government was working to tackle conflict-related violence against women and to involve women in reconciliation and reconstruction efforts.

**Ms. Terrenoir** (WOOMB International Ltd.) said that her organization promoted the use of the Billings Ovulation Method to help women monitor their fertility and make reproductive choices. Use of that family planning method helped women to gain a better knowledge of their own bodies and to reduce child mortality rates. It was an entirely natural method that did not pose the risks associated with hormonal birth control methods.

*Draft resolution entitled "Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system"* (E/2013/L.14)

**The President** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

*Draft resolution E/2013/L.14 was adopted.*

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*